

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 NSCE-00 OMB-01 IO-14 SAM-01 SAJ-01

NIC-01 SSC-01 EB-11 COME-00 LAB-06 SIL-01 AID-20

DRC-01 /173 W

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R 160855Z SEP 74

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2407

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1601

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJECT: LEADERSHIP CHANGES IN THE PRC

1. CONVERSATIONS WITH PEKING DIPLOMATS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS SUGGEST THAT THE PRC HAS STRUCK A NEW BALANCE IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF LEADERSHIP DUTIES FOLLOWING AN EARLY AUGUST TURN FOR THE WORSE IN CHOU EN-LAI'S HEALTH. AUSTRALISN EMBASSY DCM WAS TOLD BY AN MFA OFFICIAL THAT CHOU ATTENDED THE JULY 31 ARMY DAY RECEPTION AGAINST THE ADVICE OF HIS DOCTORS AND HE HAD SUFFERED A RELAPSE. THIS PRESUMABLY EXPLAINS THE LINE BEING TAKEN BY TENG HSIAO-PING AND OTHER PRC LEADERS THAT CHOU'S HEALTH IS "MORE SERIOUS" OR "GRAVER" THAN BEFORE.

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2. YUGOSLAVS HAVE INFORMATION SOURCED TO WANG HUNG-WEN

WHICH THEY CONSIDER RELIABLE THAT AT THE END OF AUGUST CHOU'S DETERIORATING HEALTH AND THE ILLNESS OF YEH CHIEN-YING LED TO A DIVISION OF THEIR FUNCTIONS AMONG OTHER PRC LEADERS. WANG WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN MADE THE FIRST VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY COMMISSION, CHEN HSI-LIEN IS ACTING IN ROLE OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE, TENG HSIAO-PING HAS ASSUMED ALL BUT THE ECONOMIC FUNCTIONS OF THE PREMIERSHIP, AND LI HSIEN-NIEN IS HANDLING THE DECISIONS ON ECONOMIC MATTERS. LI HSIEN-NIEN IS AGAIN BEING REFERRED TO AS FINANCE MINISTER IN CHINESE CONVERSATIONS WITH SOME DIPLOMATS. CHI TENG-K'UEI IS SAID TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR LABOR AND MASS ORGANIZATION AFFAIRS. YUGOSLAVS BELIEVE THAT CHANG CHU-CHIAO IS HEAVILY INVOLVED IN PARTY MATTERS BUT HE HAS NOT BEEN GIVEN THE EARLIER BROAD POWERS OF THE PARTY SECRETARY-GENERAL.

3. CHINESE HAVE STOPPED REFERRING TO LI TEH-SHENG AS "FORMAL HEAD OF THE PLA GENERAL POLITICAL DEPARTMENT" IN PAST FEW WEEKS LEADING TO SPECULATION THAT LI HAS INDEED RELINQUISHED THAT POSITION. ON THE OTHER HAND, PLA DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF LI TA REPORTEDLY TOLD CANADIAN AMBASSADOR SMALL LAST WEEK THAT WHILE LI TEH-SHENG HAD MADE SERIOUS MISTAKES, HE HAD CARRIED OUT SELF-CRITICISM AND WAS NOT NOW IN POLITICAL DIFFICULTY.

4. THERE IS INCREASED SPECULATION THAT THESE LEADERSHIP CHANGES WERE AGREED ON AT MEETING (YUGOSLAVS THINK IT WAS AN ENLARGED POLITBURO SESSION) DURING THE LAST DAYS OF AUGUST AND EARLY SEPTEMBER IN PEITAIHO. DIPLOMATS VISITING THE RESORT NOTED INCREASED ACTIVITY AT ABOUT THAT TIME AND MAO WAS VERY LIKELY THERE UP THROUGH THE SEPTEMBER MEETING WITH GOWON. THIS COULD ALSO EXPLAIN LOW TURNOUT OF PROVINCIAL LEADERS NOTED IN HONG KONG 10215. WE SHOULD SEE MORE THE LEADERSHIP DURING CELEBRATION OF THE OCTOBER 1 HOLIDAY AND DURING UPCOMING VISIT OF THE MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT.
BRUCE

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